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# MWSHS Student Newsletter

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Autumn 2024

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## MWSHS Alumna Profile

### Kelsey Proffitt

Kelsey Proffitt has always loved learning new skills and herbalism eventually became one of these. “I did self-study for several years before I decided I wanted a more structured course to guide me through all of the essential information,” she reminisced, adding: “So when I was looking for this, I came across the MWSHS program through a Google search. Since I am a full-time high school art teacher, I needed something that allowed me to work at my own pace and also be affordable. Thankfully, this program perfectly fitted the bill for that.”



Kelsey chronicled her journey in MWSHS’ Western-Herbalism module as follows: “I am pretty good at being self-directed and disciplined to study when I am interested in something, so a self-paced course was a good choice for me. However, as I got into Part 3, the Add-on Zoom session was definitely a must for me to stay on track and to get the most out of the material. It was really helpful to hear Director Alfs’ knowledge and experience on the herbs and his clients since he went into more depth than what is in the workbook.”

Asked as to which methods she found most helpful for study, Kelsey explained: “In the Add-on sessions offered through Zoom, I took notes on a Google Doc as Director Alfs was going over the information. This gave me a chance to quickly write out the extra bits of information and give me something to be able to refer back to later on when reviewing. I also used Quizlet for studying for the final exam, which was invaluable for building long-term memory of the information. Quizlet has reminders for you to study different study sets weekly and this was a huge help in the months leading up to the exam.”

We wondered which features of the Western-Herbalism program Kelsey most appreciated and if—and why—she might recommend it to others, and here is what she had to say: “I think a huge benefit is the uniqueness of the program which offers studies in Western herbalism and Asian herbalism and then Integrative herbalism to bring them all together. It gives you a chance to decide how far and in which direction you want to take your studies. In the Add-on Zoom sessions, getting to hear the clinical stories and real-world application of the herbs was also a great experience and made me feel more confident in my own knowledge for future applications. So I definitely encourage everyone to sign up for that! *(Continued in column 2)*

## Recent Graduates

We offer congratulations to the following 2024 graduates of the Master-Herbalist Diploma Program:

**Moni Shuttlesworth**

**Jason Brazil**

We offer congratulations to the following 2024 graduates of the Western-Herbalism module/program:

**Kelsey Proffitt**

**LisaMarie Bresett**

We look forward to hearing more from these graduates as they continue to apply what they have learned.

### **Kelsey Proffitt Profile** *(continued from column 1)*

Kelsey has been quite active in applying what she has learned, as she relates: “I am a hands-on learner, so I started making tinctures and other various products from when I first started learning about herbalism, back in 2019. I am also a Certified Aromatherapist and I have steadily built up a line of products but am still working on getting the business side of things organized and trying to decide if I want to build an online store or just keep it smaller for now and just do trade shows and farmer’s markets. You can find me on Instagram here: @bohemianbotanicalsapothecary.”

Kelsey also shared her long-range goals with us: “I just finished the Western Herbalist certification and plan to continue with the Master Herbalist part soon. I am still in the midst of trying to decide which path I want to take since I want to do all of it, but am feeling more drawn to the idea of being a community herbalist. I envision one day having my own herb & tea shop where I would sell bulk herbs, my products, and others’, and I would be able to see clients. Since I have a teaching background, I imagine that that will also be a part of it, since I love to share knowledge. I am also a gardener, so eventually I would like to have a community medicinal herb garden.”

Asked if she had anything else to add, Kelsey shared these thoughts: “I would like to thank Director Alfs and everyone at MWSHS for dedicating their time and lives to helping pass down the herbal knowledge so that it can live on in each new generation. Blessed be my fellow herbalists!”

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## WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop credits toward the Master-Herbalist program. Each hour of *verified* attendance (e.g., per instructor-completed workshop-credit slips as supplied by MWSHS; also on p. 11) counts toward an equivalent hour of Workshop Category #3 credits (up to the student limit of 20 hours), unless another category is specified or unless one attends a particular workshop at one of these events that is *strictly* in one of these other categories.

### "Where Do I Find Qualifying Workshops in My Local Area?"

Aside from the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, which lists resources from around the country of which we become aware, you can check holistic newspapers that are available in many larger cities. In these areas, as well as in less populated communities, you might check local, independently-owned health food stores and food co-ops, which may have bulletin boards or knowledgeable staff who may be aware of local teachers of holistic-assessment skills, herbal-medicine-making, or who may lead wild-plant walks. (Local nature centers, plant nurseries, greenhouses, horticultural clubs, and native-plant-appreciation societies may know of local wild-plant-walk instructors as well.) Finally, check the phone book for local naturopaths, herbalists, acupuncturists, and other holistic-health professionals who may be willing to mentor you on some of these skills or allow you to "shadow" them as they see clients.

### Workshops, Conferences, Lectures, & Events in Herbal Studies Across North America

**Fall Mushroom Hunting, *October 6th, 2024***, 1-4 PM. **Within 1 hour's drive of Minneapolis.** For more info, contact Jamie Rockney of Chick of the Woods Foraging: <https://chickofthewoods.com/event/fall-mushroom-hunting-oct6/>

**Wild-plant and mushroom foraging classes** in Minnesota are offered by **Four Seasons Foraging**, from now through October. These qualify for our Wild-Plant Walks workshop category. Their website is <https://www.fourseasonsforaging.com/events>.

**Wild-Plant ID and Medicine-making Classes** are Offered Periodically by Sylvia Burgos-Toftness in **Clear Lake, WI**. Check her website for upcoming events: <https://herbalsafari.com>.

**Florida Herbal Conference, *February 28 - March 2, 2025***. **Lake Wales, FL**. For more info: <https://www.floridaherbalconference.org>

### What Our Students Said about Our Last Workshop on Herbal Therapeutics—in May 2024

"Very informative and organized. I really enjoyed how you walked around and talked to the students. You are very approachable."

"Awesome! I love hearing the wealth of information that you share. Thank you for your time and attention to detail when teaching."

"Thank you for taking the time to teach us. I have gained so much since I have started and this class is the icing on the cake."

"It was a great workshop. I liked the information and casual atmosphere."

"The best workshop yet! More, please!"

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# In Praise of Weeds:

## Allies to Mankind, the Soil, and Cultivated Plants

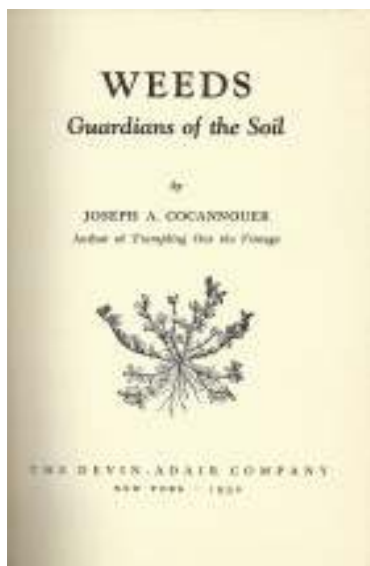
By Matthew Alfs, MH, RH(AHG), MWSH Director

“Weeding” is a procedure that every gardener proceeds to implement at various times during the growing season. Sadly, however, many of these folks toss the uprooted weeds into the garbage—“sadly” because, in many instances, those weeds are not only more nutritious than the vegetables being grown, but often just as tasty! Moreover, weeds can be beneficial to cultivated neighboring plants and even to the soil itself. Then, too, medicinal benefits can be culled from many of them.

Writing in the nineteenth century, Ralph Waldo Emerson once observed: “What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not been discovered.”<sup>1</sup> That may have been true in Emerson’s day. However, science has uncovered many of the benefits that weeds provide—to man, to the soil, and to cultivated plants.

### Weeds are Guardians of the Soil and Friends to Cultivated Crops

Let’s first consider the benefits to the soil and to cultivated plants. In a remarkable book entitled *Weeds—Guardians of the Soil*,<sup>2</sup> Professor Joseph Cocannouer, a teacher of conservation and of biology for almost half a century, ably documented eight different ways in which weeds prove helpful. These are: bringing nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and trace elements from deep in the soil to the topsoil; breaking up hardpans (hard layers between the soil’s surface and the lower soil region); enabling the roots of domesticated plants to extend their roots to otherwise unavailable nourishment; fiberizing and conditioning the soil to allow for the flourishing of beneficial tiny life forms; serving as indicators of soil condition; promoting soil capillarity through an upward movement of water along the outside of their roots; storing up minerals to keep such readily available; and serving as good eats for man and beast.



As a youngster, Cocannouer was no aficionado of weeds and was directed to hoe them out of his family’s own farm by his mother. He was also paid by a nearby farmer to hoe weeds out of that man’s cropland. One day, however, that farmer, Sol Benson, made a surprising discovery. Excitedly, he showed young Joseph how his corn was growing more healthily when in the proximity of purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), a sprawling common weed with leaves that feel like little rubber paddles.



Benson showed young Joseph how the purslane was opening up the soil for the corn’s roots so that the corn could grow deeper into the ground to obtain more nourishment.

That experience profoundly affected the young, soon-to-be biologist. Years later, his education in weeds and soil was furthered by contact with a Native American, as well as with a woman from Bermuda who showed him how her onions grew much bigger and richer in weed patches than in her cultivated rows; moreover, she told him that they kept longer before rotting.

Eventually, Cocannouer developed a list of what he considered to be the best weed companions for crops. The ones he enumerated were: pigweed, lamb’s quarters, nightshades, ground cherry, purslane, cocklebur, goldenrod, ragweed, milkweed, sunflower, several thistle species, stinging nettle, wild morning glory, wild lettuce, and sweet clover. He favored these weeds because they all have root systems that forage deep into the soil and are soil builders.

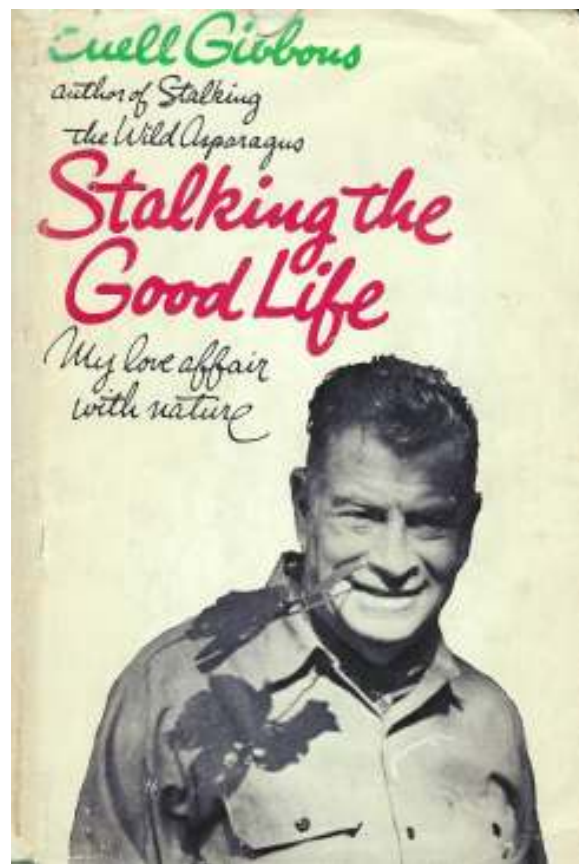
Since the time of the publication of Cocannouer’s book, a number of studies have confirmed the benefits

that weeds can provide to cultivated crops. In a recent one of these,<sup>3</sup> by three scientists from Florida International University, insect visitation and fruit yield from two plots of mango trees at a farm in Homestead, Florida were carefully examined. One of these plots was maintained as weed-free and the other had weeds growing around the trees. The study authors found that there were significantly more pollinators and a greater fruit yield in the plots where the weeds grew alongside the mango trees. With reference to the pollinators, a significant increase in visitations from the family Lycaenidae, the second largest family of butterflies, occurred in the weedy plot compared to the weed-free plot. There were also more pollinators from members of the families Apidae (bees), Vespidae (wasps), Calliphoridae (blowflies, an especially important mango pollinator), Muscidae (houseflies), and Syrphidae (hoverflies) on the trees surrounded with weeds than in the plot with no weeds. Most striking was the difference in the mean number of harvested fruits per tree: 179 (plus or minus 65) in the plot with the weeds versus only 38 (plus or minus 15) in the plot without the weeds.

### Weeds Are Nutritional Powerhouses

Let's now delve into the eighth of Prof. Coccaneur's eight beneficial aspects of weeds: their availability to serve as food. In fact, they can serve as highly nutritious fare at that. That last point is of great significance, and here's why: If one checks the U.S.D.A. nutrient databases over the years, one is confronted with a shocking realization, namely, that the nutrients in our cultivated foods are disappearing rapidly! For example, from 1947 to 1977, a whopping *two-thirds* of the trace elements in foods disappeared. In a thirty-year span, from 1966 to 1996, 80% of the calcium disappeared from collard greens.<sup>4</sup> This sorry situation is the same in other developed nations: A. B. Mayer carefully examined the mineral content of 20 fruits and 20 vegetables in Great Britain over about a fifty-year period from the 1930s to the 1980s and found marked decreases in magnesium, potassium, iron, and copper in fruits and in magnesium, calcium, sodium, and copper in vegetables.<sup>5</sup>

What, though, about edible weeds? In the mid-1960s, famed forager Euell Gibbons (1911-1975), affectionately called "The Granddaddy of American Wild-Foods Foragers," worked with the Food and Nutrition Lab at Pennsylvania State University to analyze common weeds for their nutritional content and to compare that information with their domestic counterparts in the same family. These comparisons were published in his book *Stalking the Good Life: My Love Affair with Nature*.<sup>6</sup> With what results?



In every case, Gibbons showed that the wild plants powerfully dwarfed the commercial vegetables in nutrient content. Bear in mind that this was back in the mid-1960s, when our farmed soils weren't nearly as depleted as they are today. Since that time, as we've seen, nutrition in agricultural products has nosedived. And yet, the nutrients in wild foods have remained plentiful, since their wild soil has not been exhausted by overfarming and because they grow where *they* want to grow—in the soil and in the environment (sun vs. shade, dry vs. moist, etc.) that they know will best nourish them.

Since Euell's time, others have carried on with this work, so that there is more than sufficient information to provide a chart of comparison between common edible weeds and the very best in marketed vegetables. Source material for these comparisons are the U.S.D.A. nutrient databases (from their periodic books entitled *Composition of Foods* and their website: [www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp)) and several books and articles by wild-plant researchers James Duke and Alan Atchley (1986)<sup>7</sup>; Ben Charles Harris (1973)<sup>8</sup>; Mark Pedersen (1998)<sup>9</sup>; and T. M. Zennie and C. D. Ogzewella (1977)<sup>10</sup>



## Comparison Chart of Wild vs. Domestic Greens

To interpret this chart, note the following: Greens and crucifers are compared. **Figures given are for 100-g servings of foods in their raw state** unless otherwise noted. Domesticated veggies are underlined. The four highest nutrient amounts for each category are put in **bold**. (Note that out of 24 winners here, wild plants nabbed 20, while marketed vegetables secured only 4!) “ND” = “no data available”

Vegetable	Protein	Vit. A	Vit. C	Calcium	Iron	Potassium
Amaranth	<b>3.5 g</b>	6,100 IU	80 mg	<b>215 mg</b>	3.9 mg	50 mg
<u>Beet greens</u>	2.2 g	6,100 IU	20 mg	ND	3.3 mg	ND
<u>Broccoli</u>	3.4 g	1,542 IU	93 mg	48 mg	0.9 mg	325 mg
<u>Cabbage</u>	1.4 g	133 IU	33 mg	47 mg	0.6 mg	246 mg
Cattail shoots	1.8 g	ND	76 mg	58 mg	2.0 mg	<b>639 mg</b>
<u>Cauliflower</u>	2.0 g	19 IU	46 mg	22 mg	0.4 mg	303 mg
Chickweed	1.2 g	ND	<b>350 mg</b>	160 mg	2.9 mg	243 mg
Chicory greens	1.7 g	4,000 IU	24 mg	109 mg	0.9 mg	430 mg
Dandelion grns	2.7 g	<b>14,000 IU</b>	35 mg	<b>187 mg</b>	3.1 mg	397mg
Dock greens	2.0 g	12,900 IU	<b>119 mg</b>	44 mg*	2.4 mg	338mg
Fireweed grns	2.8 g	ND	68 mg	186 mg	2.7 mg	382mg
<u>Kale (cooked)</u>	1.5 g	7,400 IU	41 mg	72 mg	0.9 mg	228mg
Lamb’s quart.	<b>4.2 g</b>	11,600 IU	80 mg	309 mg*	1.2 mg	<b>684mg</b>
<u>Parsley</u>	Trace	5,200 IU	<b>130 mg</b>	140 mg	<b>6.0 mg</b>	550mg
Peppergrass	2.6 g	9,300 IU	69 mg	81 mg	1.3 mg	<b>606mg</b>
Plantain	2.5 g	<b>13,000 IU</b>	8 mg	184 mg	1.2 mg	277mg
Purslane	1.7 g	2,500 IU	25 mg	65 mg*	3.5 mg	494mg
<u>Romaine lettuce</u>	2.0 g	2,900 IU	26 mg	40 mg	1.2 mg	322mg
Sheep sorrel	2.1 g	<b>12,900 IU</b>	54 mg	66 mg*	<b>5.0 mg</b>	198mg
Shep. purse	<b>4.2 g</b>	1,554 IU	36 mg	<b>208 mg</b>	<b>4.8 mg</b>	395mg
<u>Spinach</u>	3.3 g	6,715 IU	27 mg	99 mg*	2.7 mg	<b>557mg</b>
Sow thistle	2.4 g	2,185 IU	32 mg	93 mg	3.1 mg	67mg
Stinging nettle	<b>6.9 g</b>	1,100 IU	10 mg	ND	<b>5.0 mg</b>	20mg
<u>Swiss chard</u>	2.4 g	6,500 IU	32 mg	ND	3.2 mg	ND
<u>Turnip grns (cooked)</u>	1.4 g	5,498 IU	27 mg	<b>197 mg</b>	0.8 mg	203mg
Violet	ND	<b>15,000 IU</b>	<b>210 mg</b>	ND	ND	ND
Watercress	ND	4,900 IU	79 mg	151 mg	ND	ND
Wood-sorrel	0.1 g	2,800 IU	ND	ND	ND	ND

\* = Calcium available only, or primarily, in unusable *oxalate* form.

Here is a brief summary of some of the wild greens mentioned in the chart above.

**Chickweed** (*Stellaria media*)

Delicious edible plant, especially rich in iron, but also holding good amounts of magnesium and zinc; one of the highest-known sources of vitamin C.

**Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*)

Introduced into North America from Europe as a food crop. (At one time, kept alive the sizeable population of a Mediterranean island after locusts had destroyed their cultivated crops.) Root edible, raw or cooked. Leaves used as a bitter in salads and rich in calcium, boron, potassium, and carotenes (pro-vitamin-A compounds: alpha- and beta- carotene—second-highest-known source)

**Lamb's quarters** (*Chenopodium album*)

Leaves edible raw or cooked (eaten in moderation due to oxalate content); very rich in protein and in carotenes (pro-vitamin-A compounds: alpha- and beta- carotene) and one of the highest-known sources of potassium in greens.

**Peppergrass** (*Lepidium spp.*)

Edible leaves and seed pods, with the former extremely high in carotenes (pro-vitamin-A compounds: alpha- and beta- carotene) and quite high in potassium.

**Plantain** (*Plantago major*)

Leaves edible raw or cooked; extremely high in carotenes (pro-vitamin-A compounds: alpha- and beta-carotene—third-highest-known source) and very rich in calcium.

**Purslane** (*Portulaca oleracea*)

Rubbery leaves rich in omega-3 fatty acids, iron, and potassium. Best cooked

**Shepherd's purse** (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)

Leaves and seed pods edible raw or cooked; rich in, and one of the highest-known-sources of, protein in greens.

**Stinging Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*)

Most nutrient rich of all greens! Should be simmered 10 minutes in just enough water to cover the plant mass. One of the highest-known sources of vitamin C and *the* highest-known source of protein in greens. Also rich in calcium, chromium, magnesium, and zinc. Was used as a much appreciated source of food by prisoners of the notorious Nazi extermination camps.

**Violet** (*Viola spp.*)

Leaves/flowers nutritious and possessed of high water content. *Highest-known* source of carotenes (pro-vitamin-A compounds: alpha- and beta- carotene) in greens

**Weeds Are Also Potent Medicines: But That's Another Story**

If one were to consult the National Library of Medicine ([www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)), one would find numerous scientific studies on the medicinal aspects of the vast majority of our common weeds: chicory, dandelion, plantain, purslane, shepherd's purse, sow thistle, stinging nettle, and the list goes on and on. The breadth of this topic is way beyond the scope of a newsletter article like this. However, for those who may wish to investigate the healthful benefits of weeds in a single volume, there is my book *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2020), publ. by Minnesota Historical Society Press.<sup>11</sup>

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## **Obituaries: Jeanne Rose and Tom Brown, Jr.**

We are saddened to report the death of **Jeanne Rose**, a pioneer in the modern-American Herbal Renaissance—especially by way of her book, *Herbs & Things: Jeanne Rose's Herbal*, published in 1969. She also wrote over 20 other books (many on aromatherapy) since that time.

Rose passed on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The significance of her impact can be gauged by the fact that her life, writings, and death were even outlined in Wikipedia, a source generally ignoring of, or even unfavorable towards, herbalism and herbalists (or *anything* unorthodox, for that matter).

We are also saddened to report the death of **Tom Brown, Jr.**, the celebrated survivalist and wild-plant author, who was mentored by a Lipan Apache elder. Brown passed on August 16<sup>th</sup> of this year, at 74 years old. He wrote 18 books, many of which described how to use wild plants for food, medicine, and utility. One of these, entitled *Tom Brown's Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants*, published in 1986, was reviewed by MWSHS director Matthew Alfs in this newsletter a number of years ago. (Director Alfs also reviewed another of Brown's book, *Grandfather*, on Amazon.com.) Most of his truly wonderful books are still in print. You can view a video of his life and death, by his youngest son, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g62IsI2fomI>



## MWSHS' September Wild-Plant Walk: Educational and Enjoyable!

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, fifteen herbalism students joined MWSHS Director Matthew Alfs on a delightful, three-hour, wild-plant walk through a large park in the northern suburbs of the Twin Cities. All in all, over 50 different plants were identified—viewed, touched, and smelled.



One of the plants identified was blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), an important native-American plant that herbalists use to support female reproductive health. This plant is currently on United Plant Savers' "At-Risk" list.



Some other interesting plants encountered included prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), and boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)—the two lone specimens of which were surrounded by scores of its close relative, the very toxic white snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*, traditionally; but recently reclassified and now known as *Ageratina altissima*). Director Alfs showed students how to differentiate between the two plants, pointing out how that white snakeroot's leaves are stalked whereas boneset's are unstalked.

Director Alfs also pointed out the differences in identification between wild grape (*Vitis* spp.) leaves and fruit and those of Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), which two vines were actually intertwining with each other at one location. He noted that mistaking the latter vine's fruits for those of the former and ingesting them could be a very painfully unpleasant experience! Students then sampled some wild grapes that Director Alfs had differentiated from the berries of Virginia creeper by tracing these fruits back along the vine to the leaves.



A number of other toxic plants were identified and discussed, including leafy spurge (*Euphorbium esula*), baneberry (*Actaea rubra* and *A. pachypoda*), and Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*).

Feedback from the students was very positive. For example, a grandmother and her adult daughter both attended and afterwards the grandmother wrote us to share the following experience: "Just had to thank you for the wonderful plant walk yesterday! It was so inspiring and informative! My daughter got up this morning and took the three grandkids on a plant walk—something I would always do with them. They would ask her, but it was always "ask Nana." Her doing that made my heart sing. Thank you!" Another attendee wrote us to say: "Thank you so much for the plant walk, I learned so much today. It was amazing!"

MWSHS' next wild-plant walk will be in June, 2025.



## Book Reviews

**Quave, Cassandra Leah. *The Plant Hunter: A Scientist's Quest for Nature's Next Medicines*. Viking Press, 2021, 371pp., \$18.00**

Reviewed by Sylvia Burgos Toftness



The subtitle uses the word “quest,” a term which aptly describes both the content and tone of this book. If there were ever an herbalist urging her cause forward through fire and rain, despite illness and fatigue, around obstacles and

through disappointments, Quave is it.

Her story is autobiographical, and she narrates the book as well. In a clear voice she tells the tale of her evolution from young child struggling with birth defects to intense scientist. Her physical condition required repeated surgeries which, in turn, exposed her to painful infection. This prompted her search for biological solutions. Quave combined her extensive education with a relentless drive to find and confirm the validity of herbal remedies used in tiny communities around the world.

In the course of the book, we learn that despite physical challenges, she scales hillsides, and treads through rough terrain. As you move through the chapters, you find yourself wondering: Will she marry that handsome fellow? Can she have the children she wants? Will others join her to set up a business based on herbal solutions? Why doesn't she just give up?

The book is a page-turner as Quave pulls you into her journey. Her story is personal, engaging, and candid. It is also credible. It is extensively footnoted. It includes a glossary of terms, and a very useful index.

Because of the excellent writing and perspective, I think *The Plant Hunter*

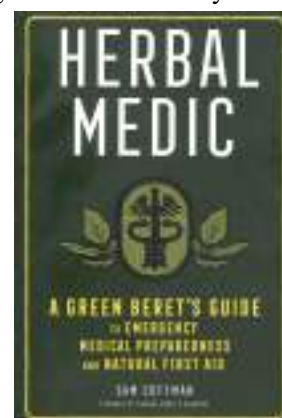
effectively argues the critical need for holistic, plant-based medicine in a world facing the enormity of antibiotic resistant bacteria, post-COVID/post-vaccination illnesses, and the constant pressures of poor diet, stress and pollution.

*Sylvia Burgos Toftness is in the MWSHS Master- Herbalist program. Her work life has included television news, teaching English at the University of Minnesota, years in public relations, and grazing cattle. She and her husband David now devote their farm to medicinal permaculture.*

**Coffman, Sam. *Herbal Medic: A Green Beret's Guide to Emergency Medical Preparedness and Natural First Aid*. Storey Publishing, 2021, softcover, 403 pp., \$24.95**

Reviewed by Jason Brazil

The current landscape of herbal medicine education is vastly different than it was only a few decades ago. Recent media emphasis on lab testing and chemical phytoconstituents has created a divide between folk/vitalist herbalists and bio-medical practitioners, whether they be MD's, ND's, FMP's or otherwise. Students' views are often colored by the interpretations of their teachers. Regardless of who they learn from, many students of herbal medicine are told that the clients they see will primarily be those for whom western medicine has failed. They are also told that the people seeking natural healthcare will have been to see many other practitioners who could not solve the issue. Herbalists seem to be relegated to the "last hope" spot, at least in the minds of a lot of herbalists out there. And why wouldn't herbalists think that, when there are more conventional paths to follow? Sam Coffman blows the lid off this myth in *Herbal Medic*. Sitting in the proverbial no-man's-land between the folk and the biomedical approaches



to chronic disease care, *Herbal Medic* is additionally loaded with real solutions for acute care needs.

The main questions the book answers are: "What happens when there isn't a conventional path to follow? What can the herbalist do when they are the first responder?" The answer to both questions: the prepared herbalist plays a critical role.

The book begins with a comprehensive section on first aid, including life-saving techniques, equipment, and mental frameworks. First aid comes before the mention of any herbs, as herbs offer support to a well prepared first responder once an injured person is stabilized. The first-aid section is written in terse and informative language, which gives the reader a detailed understanding without bogging them down in unnecessary details. It leaves us feeling both responsible and prepared. I personally felt the immediate desire to dust off my first aid kit and recheck everything.

The second section is all about Sam's foundational herbal principles, medicine making, and formulation. This section is full of real-life advice, principles for a successful experience using herbs, and a list of go-to formulas. It gives us the framework we need to tackle all kinds of medical issues in an austere setting, a topic which is explored in the third section.

The third section addresses a slew of issues an herbal medic might face. We learn about relatively straightforward issues like burns and wounds, as well as more complex things like childbirth in less than ideal circumstances. The range of skills, herbs and techniques that Sam covers in such a short section is wonderful. Herbs specific to certain conditions are discussed in conjunction with more general information about each issue. Most body tissues and issues are covered. Since the book was published after the COVID-19 pandemic, special attention is given to herbs that help with respiratory health—a welcome addition.

We round the book out with a materia medica which gives us more complete profiles

on herbs, with an emphasis on their use in the field. Overall, the book remains grounded in real experience while reminding the reader that herbs can help with a wide range of potential problems. I personally felt more prepared and more confident in what I already had learned about herbs.

A note on experience: About five years ago, I got to participate in a three-day herbal medicine experience at Sam's school near San Antonio, Texas. I can say with confidence that his book reflects the way that he runs his school—efficient, organized, heartfelt, and most of all, prepared for anything.

I highly recommend *Herbal Medic* for any herbalist who wants to be the go-to person for the continued health of their family and community. Happy healing!

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*Jason Brazil is a clinical herbalist and licensed massage therapist. His clinic, Central Texas Wellness, located in beautiful San Marcos, is a haven for those who need a jumpstart on their wellness journey. Jason is a martial-arts instructor and also teaches classes on clinical skills, herbal medicine, and holistic business in his spare time. Feel free to email him at [explorationsinhealth@gmail.com](mailto:explorationsinhealth@gmail.com) with any questions.*

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#### **A Call for Student Articles**

The *MWSHS Student Newsletter* is for you, the MWSHS student, and we would like your input and help in assembling the best possible vehicle for you. So, if you have something you'd like to contribute to the *Newsletter* (an article, news item, book review, or unique experience with herbal healing or herbal education), please don't hesitate to contact us for possible inclusion of that material into a coming issue.

For the *Spring, 2025 issue*, we are especially looking for an article or two on **medicinal herb gardening**. You herb gardeners out there, please get in touch with us!

Below, we print some workshop credit slips to use for workshops not conducted by MWSHS

### WORKSHOP CREDIT SLIP

Workshop Title:.....  
Workshop Date & Total Hours .....  
Workshop Presenter & Credentials.....  
Workshop Presenter’s Signature & Date.....  
Student Name..... Student I.D. #.....

When completed and signed by workshop instructor, make a copy for yourself & submit to:  
**Midwest School of Herbal Studies, P. O. Box 120096, New Brighton MN 55112**  
Or image as a .pdf and send as an email attachment to us at [MWSHS@aol.com](mailto:MWSHS@aol.com)  
(For Internal Use Only:) Credits Assigned..... Director’s Signature.....

### WORKSHOP CREDIT SLIP

Workshop Title:.....  
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(For Internal Use Only:) Credits Assigned.....Director’s Signature.....

